

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT BASED LEARNING TO PROMOTE THE
SPEAKING SKILL IN 9TH GRADERS AT JOSE ANTONIO GALÁN HIGH SCHOOL**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this classroom project is to evidence how Project Based Learning (PBL) can promote the speaking skill in ninth graders from a public school in Pereira, Colombia. This project was focused on environmental issues. The participants developed two different products, an architectural model of a utopian city and a vertical garden. In order to achieve the objectives, it was taken into consideration the theoretical foundations of Chaney (1998) who defines speaking as a process of building and sharing knowledge using verbal and non-verbal signs in a particular context. In addition, Thomas (2000) defines PBL as a model that allows learning new knowledge while working around projects which means that learning occurs throughout the process of developing projects of student's interests. At the end of this implementation, it was found that to promote the speaking skill with this methodology, it is necessary students' commitment and interest throughout the development of the project.

Key words: Project Based learning, Speaking skill.

RESUMEN

Este proyecto tiene como propósito evidenciar el efecto de cómo el Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos (PBL) puede fomentar la habilidad del habla en el idioma Inglés en estudiantes de noveno grado en un colegio público de Pereira, Colombia. Esta metodología permitió trabajar como temática central problemas ambientales por medio de los cuales se desarrollaron dos proyectos manuales; un jardín vertical y una maqueta de una ciudad utópica. Se usó como soporte teórico los aportes de Chaney (1998) quien define la habilidad del habla como el proceso de producir y compartir información de forma verbal y no verbal en un determinado contexto. Además, se consideraron las contribuciones de Thomas (2000) quien se refiere al Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos como un modelo que permite la adquisición de conocimientos mediante la elaboración de proyectos que parten de los intereses y necesidades de los estudiantes. Después de implementar este proyecto durante nueve clases, se obtuvo como resultado que para que se fomente la habilidad del habla por medio de esta metodología, es necesario que los estudiantes estén comprometidos e interesados a lo largo del desarrollo del proyecto, de esta manera no solo se fomentaran habilidades como la cooperación y trabajo en grupo sino la habilidad oral en Inglés.

Palabras claves:

Aprendizaje basado en proyectos, habilidad del habla.

1. Justification

Any language learner needs to develop his/her speaking, writing, reading and listening skills in view of the fact that languages are usually taught and evaluated in terms of the four language skills. However, due to the new demands in today's world, it is highlighted the importance of developing speaking skills in order to be able to communicate with others in any social situation. Hence, speaking skills become essential at the moment of being a global citizen Aamer (2016). Moreover, as mentioned by Burns & Joyce (1997), to produce oral speech, it is important to bear in mind not only grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary, but also some other aspects such as the context or the social situation.

Throughout the history of language teaching education there have been various approaches to teach speaking. Two of the most well-known and widely used of these approaches and methods are the Audio-lingual method and the Communicative Approach. This method and this approach among some others that exist within the language teaching education, reflect the relevance of the development of the speaking skill, especially in a globalization age where the English language is a lingua franca which serves as a medium for communication between people of different cultures and languages.

In the Colombian context, The Ministry of National Education has designed “*El Programa Nacional de Inglés 2015-2025: Colombia Very well*” which aims to achieve better results regarding the Colombians' English language skills. This program also provides some guidelines and documents related to the instruction and standards of the target language. For instance, the Booklet 22 for English Language Teaching which is based on the Common

European Framework of References for Languages. In this booklet, speaking is presented as an individual skill which has specific standards for each grade. Additionally, it has been developed a Suggested Curriculum for English that takes into account the needs in the Colombian educational field. This proposal presents a series of methodologies to be implemented depending on the grade. In this case, project based learning is a methodology to be used with 9th graders which invites teachers to encourage students to participate, plan, develop and assess a project.

This action plan seeks for the students to achieve in 2025 an English level that allows them to communicate, interact and share knowledge as well as to enhance their professional abilities. Despite the Colombian government efforts to improve the levels of communication in the English Language, there is evidence that demonstrates that there are still some problems which do not allow Colombian students to communicate successfully in English. Semana magazine published an interview with the expert in linguistics, Rod Ellis, who claims that the reason why many people in Colombia are not able to communicate in English is because of the few hours that English is been taught in schools. Besides that, he believes that in order to have language proficiency is important to be immersed in the language which is an opportunity that many students in Colombia do not have. On the same line, Diaz (2008) agrees that the hours for the English assignment are not enough and most of the time the schedule is not even completed. He also mentioned that the communicative competences are weak due to the fact that English is been taught isolated. Diaz (2008) believes that in order to have some basic communicative competences all the subject matters should be linked to English.

In La Celia Risaralda, a study conducted by the Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira showed that there was a tendency to use the mother tongue, Spanish, as the mean of

communication during all the English lessons. For instance, teachers presented the topic of the classes, gave instructions and interact with the students speaking in Spanish with the purpose of avoiding misunderstanding or assuming that the students do not have enough proficiency to speak in English. Since there was no interaction in English, the classes were very traditional and monotonous and there was not development of the speaking skill.

Thus, it is evidenced that in Colombia there are two main problems why the students do not learn how to communicate in a basic level of English. First, the hours assigned for English subject in the curriculum are not enough for a student to learn how to speak in a foreign language. Second, there is a lack of teaching meaningful English because it is centered to translation which means that there is a necessity for public schools in Colombia to come up with action plans that allow students to communicate and learn meaningful content in English by integrating other subject matters while they are learning a foreign language.

The purpose of this classroom project is to promote the speaking skill through the implementation of Project Based Learning. Even though PBL is not an approach for teaching speaking, it allows teachers the opportunity of creating a meaningful environment where learners can express their ideas at the same time that they are developing cognitive skills in the practice of creating a project for themselves. This project will be limited to 27 9th graders students, between an average age of thirteen to sixteen years old from José Antonio Galán School, which is a mixed public school located in Pereira, Risaralda. In this classroom project, Project Based Learning will be defined as a teaching method in which students can learn new knowledge and information by working for an extended period of time on the development of a project related to their immediate background and areas of interest (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Thomas, 2000). That is why, by working with the 9th graders, having as the main topic

environmental issues, will allow them to learn how to communicate, interact and share their ideas through short interventions as it is a topic selected by them which meets their interests and is related to their context actual condition. Finally, it is expected by the practitioners to impact in the community by showing students and teachers that is possible to teach and learn English with other methodologies in which students can be more involved and motivated.

2. Objectives

2.1 Learning Objectives:

2.1.1 General:

- To make an oral presentation about environmental issues as a product of cooperative project.

2.1.2 Specific:

- To demonstrate skills of cooperation and negotiation throughout the development of a group project.
- To communicate orally without making relevant mistakes that interfere with the intended message.

2.2 Teaching Objectives:

2.2.1 General:

- To characterize the effect of the implementation of Project Based Learning on ninth graders' speaking skill.

2.2.2 Specific:

- To describe the strengths and challenges that PBL conveys in the development of the speaking skill in a public school.
- To report the implication of teamwork during the development of a project in a public school.

3. Theoretical Framework

In order to have a clear idea at the time of reviewing this project, it is important first to define the two main constructs that built it up: Speaking skill and Project Based Learning. The definitions for each one of the concepts were provided by several researchers and experts in the language teaching field. In addition to this, at the end of the author's definitions, the practitioners' conceptualization for the same concepts will be reflected as well. Starting with the speaking skill we have Burns & Joyce (1997), Chaney (1998) and Thornbury (2005) that stated that it is a process that involves interaction because the speakers need to provide and collect information that aims to get messages across in real life settings. Regarding the second construct which is Project Based learning, Thomas (2000), Harris & Katz (2001) and Barron & Darling-Hammond (2008) suggested that project- based learning relies on students' background and focuses on problem solving through investigation.

3.1 Speaking skill

When learning a foreign language, the speaking skill is one of the main goals that the learners seek to achieve due to the fact that most of the time the aim of learning a foreign language it is to communicate orally with different people. According to Burns & Joyce (1997), the speaking skill is a process that involves interaction because the speakers need to provide and collect information. They also state that at the time of producing spoken language, it is important to consider not only grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary but also the context or the social situations. Similarly to Burn & Joyce (1997) definition, Chaney (1998) defines speaking as *“the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a*

variety of contexts". It signifies that when human beings interact through spoken language, they not only use their voice as the mean of communication, there are others factors that play an important role. For instance, the movement of the hands and the gestures that people do while speaking help to transmit a clear and meaningful message. In the same way as Chaney (1998) highlights that the act of speaking could take place in different contexts, Thornbury (2005) claims that speaking is a daily activity which takes place in real life situations. He argues that "*it (speaking) is usually 'linear' since 'words follow words' and utterances follow utterances*".

This project seeks to support students in a process in which they can feel comfortable while carrying out an oral presentation in English. In the same line of thoughts, our main purpose is for the learners to convey a clear message in the spoken language of a topic of their interest, having the opportunity of rehearsing and practicing aspects such as pronunciation and a good sentence construction. Oral presentations tasks are categorized by Brown (2000) as part of extensive speaking, which are tasks that require speaking with a very limited interaction and help students to gained fluency. Indeed, speaking is considered to be the productive skill as it is focused on the production of verbal utterances to get messages across. Throughout the years, there have been various approaches and methods to teaching speaking due to the changing views of the nature of language education and teaching of languages.

3.2 Some approaches and methods to teaching speaking

As stated in the previous paragraph, in language teaching education there have been various approaches and methods that emphasize oral production and interaction as the bases and ultimate goals of study. In this section, one method and two approaches to teaching speaking will be discussed. The Audio-Lingual method which was widely used in the 1950s and 1960s,

and has its origins during the World War II. It is based on Skinner's Behaviorism theory which proposes that human beings can be trained through a system of reinforcement. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define it as "*A method of foreign or second language teaching which (a) emphasizes the teaching of speaking and listening before reading and writing (b) uses Dialogues and Drills (c) discourages use of the mother tongue in the classroom (d) often makes use of contrastive analysis*". Therefore, in the Audio-lingual method the focus remains on speaking and listening skills, it rejects the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, uses conversation and grammar drills and describes the structural differences and similarities of the native and the target language. Regarding the two approaches, on the one hand, there is The Communicative Language Teaching. This approach can be considered as an extension of some previous methods such as the Situational Language Teaching method and the Audio-Lingual method. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010) it focuses on meaningful communication rather than structure, making emphasis on functional uses of the language. On the other hand, the second approach that is The Holistic Approach to Teaching Speaking, claims that during the process of acquiring speaking competences some issues related to the learners' cognitive, affective and social needs should be addressed. In terms of methodology, Goh and Burns (2012) argue that in this approach a "*learn-to-speak-by-speaking*" perspective is rejected and all of the speaking lessons try to include activities which aim to develop grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, but at appropriate stages of the learning sequence.

In short, the Audio-Lingual method is mainly focus on audio-lingual skills and it is characterized by the use of pattern practice. On its part, the Communicative language teaching refers to an approach which has interaction as its main core and considers that students need to be involved in real communication to learn how to use the target language. Finally, the holistic

approach to teaching speaking takes into account the learners' needs as well as the opportunity to focus on different activities and tasks in order for the students to practice their speaking skills. It is worth mentioning some approaches and methods to teaching speaking due to the fact that our project aims to support students' performance while developing extensive speaking tasks.

3.3 Assessing Speaking

Assessment is an integral part for the students' learning process due to the fact that it provides some feedback and a general understanding of the achievement of goals and objectives. Furthermore, there are some types or multiple ways to assess depending on the approach, method or technique used in the classroom as well as the skill in which it has been working on. For instance, assessing the speaking skill could be challenging due to its complexity and some aspects that may affect the scoring criteria and results such as the teachers' perspectives and the expectation of specific outcomes. As a way of illustration, Richards (2008) suggests some questions that could work as a guide for teachers when assessing the speaking skill. Those are: how important is the accuracy in pronunciation or grammar? How much time should each of the students speak? Until what point is it acceptable that the learner uses long pauses? Finally, does the student introduce a new and relevant topic? The focus of the class will allow the teacher to determine what questions would be helpful to assess the students' performance in the tasks and how much importance he/she gives to each aspect of pronunciation, language use, hesitation and the communication of a meaningful message. Consequently, what is relevant for a teacher at the time of teaching the speaking skill is to have a clear idea of what he/she wants to be assessed following the criteria that they consider is the fairest with the students according to the aim of the class.

Similar to Richards' suggestions, Luoma (2004) emphasized in the importance of differentiating *Individual speaking* and *Speaking as interaction*. She claimed that the former is one of the skills that learners of other languages should develop. Luoma (2004) also argues that at the time of assessing students' performance in the speaking skills is necessary to have a clear focus of what are the right things to assess. Thus, she defined four aspects that must be taken into account when assessing: in the first place, the examiner should specify the type of speaking they will assess. Then, tasks and rating criteria that measure the type of speaking chosen should be develop. After that, the examinees should be familiarized about the type of speaking, the criteria and tasks that will be assessed. Finally, the evaluator needs to make sure that the assessment follows in a coherent way all the steps explained above. Luoma (2004) also referred to *rating scales to assess speaking* which includes the scores and the statements explaining what each of them means. Some examples of these scales are *The Holistic scale* which aims to evaluate students' ability as a whole. The examiner should look for a general impression of students' performance. On the other hand, she explained *The analytic score* that includes a detailed guide of how to evaluate the students in specific aspects. In addition, this scale allows identifying students' weakness and strengths. In addition to Richards' and Luoma's perspectives, Brown (2004) suggests that when assessing oral skills, teachers must *specify the criterion, set appropriate tasks, elicit optimal input and establish practical, reliable scoring procedures*. For example, in oral presentations, a checklist or a grid are commonly used as means for assessing them.

In brief, Richards (2008) points out the importance of asking four guiding questions for teachers at the moment of assessing the speaking skill. According to Luoma (2004), when assessing the students' speaking skill it is needed to have a clear understanding of the right

aspects to assess. Finally, Brown (2004) proposes four main aspects to be followed in order to have an effective assessment which could reflect the validity of the students' evaluation performance. Regarding our classroom project, it is essential for us to include and have an overview of assessment as in every learning course it is needed to determine if the learning goals and objectives were achieved. Based on this notion, by conducting different types of assessment, at the end of our implementation, we will be able to note whether or not the use of Project-Based Learning helps to promote extensive speaking in ninth graders from a public school in Pereira. As a final point, we must bear in mind the use of a project related to the students' interests owing to the fact that it will allow us to engage the students and to create a more dynamic learning environment.

3.4 Project Based Learning (PBL)

The language teaching field has within a wide variety of approaches that seek to provide teachers with methodologies, material and techniques to achieve student's learning of a foreign language. Project Based learning is considered a newer method in language education. Boss (2011) claims that the roots of PBL started with Dewey in 1959. It is suggested that students' development is more successful when they are engaged with real-world situations. With Dewey's first idea several researchers have built the concept as Barron & Hammond (2008) and Thomas (2000), who stated that project based learning is a method that involves the students' background knowledge to solve real life problems, with the implementation of this method is also possible for them to have more control of their own learning process. Following the same line, Harris & Katz (2001) defined PBL as a method that is centered on students which does not include following a rigid and linear lesson plan. What is important in this approach according to them is to provide students an opportunity to investigate in topics that are worthy to learn more

about. Thomas (2000) sums up the concept “*as a model that organizes learning around projects*” which means that the learning happens throughout the process of developing projects of student’s interests. Therefore, Project Based Learning could be defined as an engaging model that provide students the opportunity to learn a new language by doing tasks of their main interests where they will be able to develop not only language skill but also critical thinking skills.

As the final goal of the project is for the students to develop an oral presentation, we were digging into different methodologies that could allow us to take to the classes a new way of learning in which the students can feel engaged. Based on that, we realized that Project Based learning (PBL) is an engaging and new alternative for us to implement. Among the authors mentioned above there are others that identified the components of PBL. With the purpose of having a better understanding on how this method works, there are researchers that explained how a class with PBL should be carried out.

3.5 Lesson Planning based on Project-Based Learning

In a broad sense, in project Project-Based Learning a wide variety of different projects can be conducted. Besides, there is no a unique commonly standardized way to implement a specific project. However, there are some authors who provide some essential generalities or procedures to follow when structuring the development of Project-Based Learning. For instance, Kriwas (1999, as cited in Fragoulis, 2009) presents four general stages that can be used for a successful project implementation. The first stage is *speculation*, in this stage; teachers and students select together the project topic based on the curriculum or after having discussed about a current or interesting topic for the students. The second stage, *designing project activities*,

focuses on group formation, role assigning, methodology decision, information sources, and selection of activities and places in which students can be taken to carry out their project. At the next stage, which is *conducting the project activities*, the activities designed in the previous stage are implemented. For that, the students should work on their project by gathering information, answering questions, exploring different points of view and consulting encountered problems with the teacher. After that, students will have to show their final products that could be oral presentations, student-produced documentaries, poster sessions, etc. to their classmates, teachers, school principals, parents or even their town community. The last stage, *evaluation*, includes both self- evaluation and evaluation from others. At this point, it is analyzed whether or not the initial goals and objectives were achieved.

From a similar perspective, Railsback (2002) highlights the importance of outlining project goals and objectives to have a successful project implementation. She argues that even though the outline of different projects can take multiple forms depending on the context and students' and teachers' interests, they should contain at least six main aspects: *situation or problem, project description and purpose, performance specifications, rules, list of project participants with roles assigned and assessment*. In the first aspect, it has to be described in general terms the problem or issue that the project will address. In the second aspect, it has to be stated a brief and precise explanation of the projects' ultimate purpose as well as how it will address the issue or situation. In the third aspect, it has to be included a list of criteria or quality standards requirements that the project must meet. In the fourth aspect, it has to be provided some rubrics and guidelines to know how to implement the project; timelines and short-term goals should be included too. In the fifth aspect, it has to be created a list with the project participants, that is to say, project teammates, community members, school staff members and

parents. In the last aspect, it has to be explained how the students' performance will be evaluated. At this stage, both the learning process and the final product are evaluated. On the same line, Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2005) claim that the roles of the students and the teacher should be considered in order to have a successful project implementation.

Project- based learning is a learner centered approach which means that the students should take the responsibility for their own learning. As it also involves many people working together to solve a specific problem or issue, students should work on their teamwork skills and thinking skills. The teacher by his/her part should promote and encourage the students' participation by guiding them during their learning process. Moreover, the teacher should seek for a learning environment of shared responsibilities in which every individual has something relevant to do.

To sum up, it has to be taken into account that there is not an exclusive way to implement and carry out projects. Nevertheless, all the authentic and well-developed projects share some features such as the stages to be followed, the importance of outlining goals and objectives and finally the assumption that both the students and the teachers must have an active role during the learning process which implies that the teacher act as a facilitator for the students and the students work together to achieve some goals and objectives, taking ownership of their success. Regarding the main purpose of our classroom project which is to promote oral production through the use of Project-Based Learning, we strongly believe that it is mandatory for us to keep in mind all the essentials for structuring it since in that fashion, we will avoid potential pitfalls when implementing and developing the project. As a final point, it is worth mentioning that in addition to the essentials for structuring Project-Based Learning, it is appropriate and necessary to have a clear understanding of its benefits when implementing an English language

class.

3.6 Benefits of Project- Based learning

The implementation of Project- Based learning in an English language class represents many challenges for both students and teachers. When facing those challenges the students could get some advantages or benefits that will help them in the development of their learning process. According to Railsback (2002) Project-Based learning offers significant opportunities to learners from different backgrounds due to the fact that they have the chance to develop projects related to topics and experiences that are meaningful for them. In that way, motivation will increase and students' will be willing to participate in the projects carrying out in-classroom tasks and homework. She also affirmed that working with projects create strong connections with real life situations because the learners develop problem- solving and critical thinking skills. It is also important to highlight that learners are involved in a context very similar to the reality. Thus, all the process will be relevant for them since they will not focus on isolated and decontextualized topics. In addition, learners develop skills such as collaborative, teamwork, social and communicative skills while constructing knowledge.

Finally, she argued that students' self-esteem will increase given the fact they will feel that their contributions are important and will help their community or the school. Moreover, students will recognize and involve their learning styles and abilities during the planning and designing of the project. In the same line of thoughts Fragoulis (2009) said that students' intrinsic motivation increases showing interest in the projects. He agrees with Railsback (2002) when referring to development of self-esteem since the collaborative- work allows the students to feel free at the time of giving ideas and participating in any activity of the project. The

increment of self-esteem and motivation supports the improvement of the language skills.

Thereby, students want to use and try different things out in relation to language in order to share their opinions about what is going on in the project. On his part, Dörnyei (2001) claimed that making students work in groups creates an enriching environment where the learners acquire experiences from their partners and also learn to handle the possible differences among them. Furthermore, the author concluded that “*In cooperative situations there is a sense of obligation and moral responsibility to the fellow-cooperators*”. In other words, the project requires responsibility and autonomy and if someone in the group has low motivation the other members will support and remind him/her of the responsibility of reaching a set goal. For this project the benefits of the implementing Project-Based learning will be mainly reflected on the increment of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation since the students will choose the main topic of the project.

In this framework it has been reflected the different points of view that experts in language education have regarding the speaking skill, as well as the foundation of PBL method. But most importantly, this conceptual framework explained how the improvement of oral production is linked to the implementation of Project Based learning. Consequently, the perspectives of each author will help to support the decisions taken during the project since we will have a better understanding about how students could improve their speaking skill while developing real life situations. Our classroom project will be implemented at Institución Educativa Jose Antonio Galán which is a public school located in Pereira, Risaralda. It will be focused on ninth graders with an A1 level of proficiency. Thus, our project seeks to help students to use speaking through the implementation of Project Based Learning as the main methodology in the class; taking into consideration that the students of this school have better skills in terms of grammar and reading. In that way, they will have balanced language proficiency and they will be

able to carry out a final oral presentation according to the competencies required to have an A1 level of proficiency.

4. Literature Review

Nowadays, many English language teachers want to implement new approaches in class in order to develop students' competences in the English language. For instance, it is important to highlight that around the world there are many studies that look for proving the effectiveness of new approaches such as Project-Based Learning. In this paper, there will be two studies that were based on PBL. The first one, developed by Dewi (2016), and the second carried out by Salazar & Murillo (2016) concluded that, this approach enriches students' learning processes because of the experience of solving real-life problems.

The study developed in Banda Aceh, Indonesia by Dewi (2016), which is named *Project Based techniques to improve speaking skills*, aimed to determine whether the use of project-based improved or not the speaking skill of eleven graders. The researcher divided the study in two phases, each one with three meetings. The instruments used in collecting the data were the researcher's and the students' observation sheets, tests and students' questionnaire sheets. The questionnaires were handled to the students at the end of the project where they needed to match if they agreed or not about the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning. For the application of PBL in teaching speaking Dewi (2016) selected the steps proposed by Bell (2010) which were: speculation, designing, conducting and performance. The first step referred to the moment in which teachers and students choose the project's topic, based on the curriculum and the students' interests and needs. The second step included group formation, assigning roles and methodology decision. In the third step, the students conducted the project activities such as gathering information and consulting with the teacher the problems encountered in their work. Finally, the last step was when the students perform in front of the class. At the end of the study, the

researcher concluded that the use of the PBL technique can improve students' speaking skills. On the same line, the questionnaires handled to the students also showed that this technique could help students to get more motivated.

Salazar & Murillo (2016) developed a similar study with the purpose of *Teaching vocabulary through the implementation of Project-Based Learning* with twenty-three 9th graders in a public school in Pereira, Colombia. Different from Dewi (2016) who chose the steps proposed by Bell (2010), Salazar & Murillo (2016) selected the five stages proposed by Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2005) in their research *Collaborative project based learning and problem-based learning in higher education: a consideration of tutor and student roles in learner-focused strategies*. The first stage was about planning; its purpose was to notice the students' common interests. The second step, was researching. At this point, the groups were already organized; they took the responsibility for the project and selected a title for it. For the third stage, they handled the first draft with their ideas in a piece of paper. Then, they wrote it again according to the corrections made by the facilitators. Finally, they submitted the project. It is important to mention that Salazar & Murillo (2016) used tools such as textbooks and videos with speeches made by specialists. At the end of the study, they concluded that it is fundamental to identify students' needs and interests in order to have a positive learning process. Moreover, the researchers agreed with the results of the study made by Dewi (2016). All of them found out that Project-Based learning did helped learners to improve their English learning process as well as gaining skills for searching for information and building new ideas.

To conclude, the two studies mentioned above support our project idea of implementing Project-Based learning with 9th graders to promote the speaking skill. Therefore, Dewi (2016) worked on the speaking skill as the main focus which is closely related to our project idea of

working on promoting the speaking skill. Additionally, Salazar & Murillo (2016) developed their research project in a 9th grade in a public school in Pereira, we consider that it guides us in the process of carrying out this type of approaches in the regional context since we also aim to conduct our classroom project in the same setting. On the other hand, there are some differences among the studies mentioned and our classroom project. Dewi's (2016) population was 11th graders while our population will be 9th graders. Besides, Salazar & Murillo (2016) focused on improving vocabulary whereas we are planning to promote students' speaking skill. Since both studies showed interesting and successful results for the students, now we have a better understanding of how Project-Based Learning is implemented and how it facilitates the learning of a foreign language. Based on the positive results obtained in the previous studies, what we expect to achieve with the implementation of PBL is mainly to provide students the opportunity to improve their oral skills. We want not only to prompt their speaking ability in a foreign language but to show them that it is possible to be motivated to speak about a topic of their interest in a language different from their mother tongue.

5. Methodology

5.1 Description of the practicum

This classroom project was carried out in the public school Jose Antonio Galán. Besides, it was developed throughout nine lessons of ninety minutes. Each of the lessons took place once per week on Wednesdays. On the other hand, 9th graders were normally exposed to the English class, six hours per week and their English teacher was a *Licenciada en la enseñanza de la lengua Inglesa*.

5.1.1 Context

With the purpose of having a clear perspective of the school in which the project was developed, it is important to know the characteristics of the institution and the participants involved in the project. The school is named Jose Antonio Galán. Additionally, it is a mixed public school which its main focus is academic education. The school's socioeconomic stratum is 1 and 2 and it has an extended schedule from 6:45am to 3:30pm. Regarding the number of teachers and students, there are 42 in-service teachers and 868 students.

In addition, in order to develop this classroom project it was necessary to know the facilities, material and sources that were available in the institution. First of all, there are 24 classrooms; each of them is well illuminated and has one whiteboard. Some classrooms have a fan and the school has two video projectors and two auditoriums. There is also a huge space for all the school events. The school has a library with plenty of books including English books for students and teachers. There is a computer lab but it is only used for the computer class. This institution has many gardens, trees and a sport field.

5.1.2 Setting

This professional thesis took place in Jose Antonio Galán School. In terms of the English Curriculum, the teachers follow the standards of *La guía 22 propuesta por el Ministerio de Educación Nacional and Colombia Bilingüe Program*. Besides, the English subject is taught in every grade. Ninth graders are exposed to the English language 6 hours per week, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The teacher in charge is a *Licenciada en la enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa* from *La Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira*. Regarding the physical space where the English class took place, it is a medium sized classroom well illuminated with one whiteboard. Besides, the sitting arrangement allowed moving students around in order to work in teams which were necessary to develop the projects.

5.1.3 Participants

The participants of this classroom project were 27 students from 9th grade, between an average age of thirteen to sixteen years old from a public school in Pereira Risaralda. The students' native language is Spanish and they had an A1.1 level of English proficiency. According to their teacher and the observation that was carried out by the practitioners, there was one boy who was able to have a basic conversation in English. In addition, the 80% of the students were able to understand the class with good explanations and examples. Finally, just a 10% of the students struggled a lot with the foreign language.

5.1.4 Practitioners

This classroom project was carried out by three practitioners of the 9th semester of the *Licenciatura en bilingüismo con énfasis en Inglés*. Regarding the design of the project, the three participants worked together. On the other hand, during the implementation of it, the

practitioners had switching roles. For instance, in some lessons one of the practitioners was the teacher while the others were the observer and the teacher's assistant.

5.2 Data Collection Methods

5.2.1 Professional growth

Carter (2012) believed that teachers, who want to see improvement in their careers, need to acknowledge other teachers' experiences and their own. Then, it is necessary to reflect upon them. That is why, in this classroom project, the practitioners had into account a reflection part. Additionally, they also took into consideration an observer's opinion as well as students' results. In order for this reflection to be objective and to have reliability, different tools were used: journals, observation, students' artifacts and rubrics.

5.2.2 Journals

According to Walker (2006) there is not an established definition for journal. However, it could be seen as any written paper that practitioners perform with the purpose of becoming aware of the challenges that they faced in a previous class and the possible solutions for coming teaching experiences. The use of journals during this classroom project was worth due to the fact it allowed us to reflect on our feelings and performance during each class. Therefore, it worked as a technique that helped to build awareness on the lessons' aspects to reflect on. A notebook was used after each lesson, in which a reflection was wrote down bearing in mind the role of the practitioners in the lesson, for instance, the teacher, assistant and observer. The teacher analyzed her performance during the lesson, if the lesson's aim was achieved or not, student's performance, among other issues. Moreover, the observer and the assistant wrote down

comments and perceptions that they had towards teachers' and students' performance and the lesson itself.

5.2.3 Observation

Observation is the process of collecting data by watching and analyzing behaviors, events and feelings when they take place in their natural environment. Wajnryb (1996) states that observation should be a skill that teachers need to incorporate in their professional lives. Moreover, the author explains that observations may have different purposes such as assessment, analysis, and compilation of data for further interpretation. In terms of this classroom project, observation was developed since it was necessary for us to collect information that responds to the objectives of the project and the progress of the students in terms of the speaking skill and development of collaborative skills. Therefore, observation was carried out in every lesson and it was developed by one of the practitioners who wrote comments regarding the issues occurred during the lesson in the journals mentioned above. (See appendix 1)

5.2.4 Students' Artifacts

McGreal, Broderick & Jones (1984) stated that students' artifacts include all the homework assignments, worksheets, seatwork activities, practice activities and random samples of students' learning efforts provided during a collection period of time, such as an entire teaching unit or just one single lesson. Besides, they pointed out the importance for teachers to assume the responsibility of collecting those students' artifacts in view of the fact that they serve as an evidence of the students' learning process as well as an objective way for analyzing and discussing the students' performance.

In regard to this classroom project, students' artifacts were collected during the nine sessions in which PBL was implemented to promote the speaking skill in 9th graders. For doing so, it was necessary to understand that even though it was carefully checked if the students were learning and internalizing the vocabulary, facts and information related to the final product, the attention was focused mainly on the language activities such as dialogues, peer interactions, information gap, recording and drilling activities.

5.2.4.1 Rubrics

One of the instruments that teachers have in order to achieve score reliability is the support of rubrics to rate productive tasks. Dunbar (2006) mentioned that the purpose of rubrics is to measure accurately and objectively the component assessed. In addition, Luoma (2004) suggests a set of considerations to bear in mind when designing rubrics. First, test- developer must specify the aspects that make a task more or less successful. In order to do so, it is necessary to observe students' performance in the tasks. Finally, it is important to keep in mind what kind of talk is the examinee delivering; in this classroom project was an oral presentation. Based on the previous considerations, the use of rubrics in the development of the project aimed to gather objective information about the progress made in the speaking skill through the implementation of PBL. (See appendix 2)

6. Instructional Design

In view of the fact this classroom project aimed to promote the speaking skill in 9th graders through the implementation of project-based learning, it is important to highlight what it was about. Therefore, according to Harris & Katz (2001) PBL is a method that is student centered which does not include following a rigid and linear lesson plan. PBL provides an opportunity to work on topics that are interesting for the students. In order to implement Project Based Learning in a class, it is necessary to integrate the 21st century skills and to connect the project with real life situations, it was considered that this approach allows students to develop critical thinking skills, collaborative skills which can be achieved in their immediate reality. Additionally, students will foster their emotional intelligence while working on topics of their interests. At the same time students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will increase since they will work with people they already know and they feel comfortable with.

6.1 Model

As mentioned before, PBL does not follow a rigorous lesson plan. Thereby, it was necessary to define and approach and model that guided the process. Moreover, this classroom project was developed under the central design approach proposed by Richards (2010) which emphasizes in the selection of methods and procedures. Besides, the development of the lesson plans was based on Presentation Practice and Production (PPP) which, according to Criado (2013), benefits learners process due to the fact that having patterns of a sequence organization, provokes a feeling of security towards the class.

This classroom project was focused on students' interests and reality, for instance, topics such as environment or ecology, Colombian cultures, technology, arts, and globalization. With

the purpose of choosing a topic to carry out the project, a survey was conducted (See appendix 3). The results showed that most of the students have an interest in environmental issues. So, the two final products of the students' projects were a utopian city or a vertical garden, being the former an architectural model built up with recycled materials and the latter a garden planted using plastic bottles.

In order to achieve those final products, the students developed them through different phases. The first one was *Speculation*, the students chose the topic to develop the project. After that, the second phase took place, which was *Designing the project activities*, the students were divided into small groups and the practitioners assigned the role of each student in the team (leader, designer on paper, writer, researcher) Then, the students did some research about the topic they chose and they decided the steps to follow in order to create the final product. During the third stage, *Conducting the project activities*, students started the design of the product and received feedback from the practitioners, when necessary students discussed issues related to their performance as group. The final phase was *Evaluation*, in which the final product was presented for the students. It was checked if the aims and objectives stated at the beginning of the process were achieved or not. The students were divided into 7 groups of 4 or 5 people; each group had the opportunity of choosing one of the final projects already mentioned.

Therefore, the design of the lessons was focused on environmental aspects which were implemented during nine sessions; each session lasted 90 minutes. For every lesson were determined two essential elements: The aim of the class and a driving question which are included in each lesson plan. The aim of the class looked for the achievement of a goal, for example "At the end of the lesson students will be able to explain what a utopian city and a

vertical garden mean in an oral form”. Regarding the driving question, it was for both students and teachers, for the teachers it was a support to initiate and focus the inquiry of the project and it sets a clear idea of its purpose. To plan our lessons it was decided to include a driving question for the project in general and for each lesson since helped to guide the students during the process and to find the reasons why they were developing different activities. One example of a driving question for a lesson related to the previous aim could be “Which are the characteristics of and utopian city and a vertical garden? “Regarding the language outcomes, this classroom project aimed to prepare students to address audiences while talking about a familiar topic for them. Moreover, it was expected that the students produced oral speech where a clear pronunciation, the master of fillers and the control of hesitation can be evidenced.

6.1.1 Development and Implementation

The lessons of this classroom project were developed considering the structure of the PPP model (see appendix 4). In the Presentation stage, the practitioners presented information, vocabulary correlated to the students’ project. The practitioners used material such as videos, flash cards, readings for presenting them (see appendix 5). During this stage practitioners activated students’ prior knowledge regarding to the topic by brainstorming general ideas. During the second stage, production; the language expressions required for the development of the class were presented. Finally, in the production stage, practitioners assisted students’ in terms of pronunciation, body language, accuracy. This was done with the help of activities such as interviews, among others. In that sense, students were more prepared to present their final product.

7. Assessment

In order to determine if the implementation of Project-Based Learning was effective or not, it was necessary to consider assessment. Therefore, Nunan (2004) states that for defining assessment, it is important to understand its relation with evaluation. Nunan (2004) concludes that evaluation refers to the collection of data regarding the students' performance in terms of the use of language. On the other hand, Nunan highlights that assessment is the set of procedures used by the teacher or tester to collect the data from the students.

There are two ways of assessment that are commonly used in the educational field; formative and summative. It was considered that PBL allowed the use of both of them at the same time. It was possible to work with summative since the very final task was an oral presentation in which learners presented their final product. At the end of the lessons, the students' final project was graded from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest).

The oral presentation was developed as follows; each group presented its final product explaining what it was about, how they did it, the materials they used, the purpose of their products that contributes to the environment. At this point, the practitioners were able to identify if the students did or not improve their speaking skill. Hence, a rubric was taken into account to score their oral performance. In the same line, formative assessment was also used due to the fact that each lesson had a specific aim which should be achieved in order to develop the final task explained above. The idea of implementing formative assessment was mainly to provide feedback to the learners.

Equally important; the use of journals with notes about the aspects to improve and the progress made in specific classes was one way to keep track in what it was needed to reinforce in the students. Thus, during the lessons the students carried out activities such as short

interventions, recording activities and performances of interviews (See appendix 6) among others. Both formative and summative assessment provided us with enough information to measure the achievement of the set goals.

8. Results

8.1 Professional Growth

This category is focused on the professional competences encountered in the development of this project. These results include aspects related to lesson planning, students' English level and institutional limitations. This section is presented in two different sections: strengths and challenges.

8.1.1 Strengths

The use of Kriwas' methodology as the main core for implementing Project Based Learning.

The decisions made regarding the project and its lesson planning were facilitated by the adaptation of the stages proposed by Kriwas (1999). During the development of the sessions, these stages can be evidenced in the lesson planning, in which time was distributed among studying the language and creating the vertical gardens and the architectural model of the utopian cities. In addition to that, it is important to mention that each of the classes were led by a driving question. Its purpose was to guide students during the whole project.

The first stage called *speculation* was used for the selection of the topics. In our case, this stage was carried out during the first session when they answered a survey in which they had the possibility to select environmental issues as the main course of their project.

Number of sessions	Driving Question	Activities
1	What topic would you select for working on the development of the project?	Survey

The second stage called *designing project activities*, was focused on group formation, role assigning, information sources, selection of activities and places in which students could be taken to carry out their projects.

Number of sessions	Driving Question	Activities
2	What is each project about and which are their main characteristics?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explanation of utopian city and vertical gardens through the use of architectural models. 2. Readings discussions. 3. Students' defined the characteristics of the projects, name, purpose, type of population or population addressed, how the city will work, type of seeds. 4. 4. Short oral presentation about those characteristics.

The next stage was *conducting the project activities*, that involved the implementation of the activities previously planned. For instance, students worked on their project by gathering information, answering questions, exploring different points of view and consulting encountered problems with the teacher. Conducting the project activities stage was part of the lesson planning since the second class until the eight sessions.

Number of sessions	Driving questions	Activities
6	<p>1.What are the steps to follow and the material to use when creating the projects?</p> <p>2.How will you start developing your oral presentation script?</p>	<p>1.Students wrote the steps to be followed for developing their projects.</p> <p>2.Students gathered material for their architectural models.</p> <p>3.Students designed a map based on a reading about recycling processes. Then, they explained their maps orally in front of their classmates.</p> <p>4.Students started the design of the architectural models.</p> <p>5.Students performance about a tv show “Interview”.</p> <p>6.Students wrote the script for the final oral presentation</p> <p>-Students rehearsed for the final oral presentation.</p>

Finally, the last stage was evaluation in which it was assessed whether the goals of the project were achieved or not. Evaluation took place in the last day of implementation when they conducted an oral presentation about their final projects; architectural model of an utopian city and vertical garden.

Numbers of sessions	Driving questions	Activities.
1	What is the result of each project?	1.Students presented their architectural models through an oral presentation.

The charts presented above are an explanation of the use of driven questions and the adaptation of the stages proposed by Kriwas (1999, as cited in Fragoulis, 2009). Even though the practitioners only knew the general notions of Project Based Learning methodology, those steps were a blueprint that allowed structuring the the planning of the project.

Similar to Kriwas (1999, as cited in Fragoulis, 2009), Railsback (2002) states that the implementation of project based learning can take different paths according to the context's needs, and teachers and student's interests. She also argues that even though it is a flexible methodology, it must contain main aspects such as the purpose, the roles of the participants and the assessment criteria. In short, the principles mentioned by the authors contributed to the whole project development.

To conclude, it is important to highlight that when teachers are going to implement a new methodology, trusting their instincts is not enough. On the contrary, it is highly recommended to have clear theoretical foundations since you might need to adjust the objectives to the context and the needs of the population.

8.1.2 Challenges

Lesson Planning

Throughout the process of planning and implementing different activities related to the speaking skill, it was noticed that students' English level was not enough for the demands of the activities. Besides, it was observed that learners' autonomy was not evident. Therefore, it was necessary to listen to students' concerns in order to know what modifications needed to be made in regards to lesson planning. Data from journal four is presented to support this statement:

“During this session students asked to talk to us for a moment at the beginning of the class. They said that they do not like that we constantly speak English during the classes because they do not understand and know the language very well. Also, they said that they consider that sometimes the classes were boring, for example, when they have to read about information in regard to the class’ topic. Moreover, they said that they do not like the fact of having to talk a lot in English during the classes because it was difficult and boring for them”

E4; Cano; Oct/11/2017(4-13)

The situations previously exposed, made us understand that Scrivener’s (2005) and Brown’s (2000) perspectives in terms of lesson planning skills and learners’ factors are crucial for developing an English class. Scrivener (2005) argues that teachers who are able to identify the needs inside a group are more likely to achieve the objectives. Indeed, successful teachers understand the signs that students provide when they are not happy with the route of the course. Likewise, Brown (2000) claims that lessons should align learners’ needs and class’ objectives rather than teachers’ beliefs and practices.

The fact that students manage to express their disagreement, made the pre-service teachers realize about the necessity of creating communication channels in order to improve the conditions of the learning environment. All over this experience, pre-service teachers learnt the importance of modifying the lessons not only considering the demands of the project but the students’ needs and preferences without leaving aside the main objective of the classes.

English Language use in the classroom

It was evidenced that one of the main reasons for students’ disagreements with the activities proposed during the implementation was their limited English level. This affected the

accomplishment of the goals especially in terms of the speaking skill. To illustrate this, in almost all the lessons students constantly asked practitioners to give them the English form of Spanish utterances. One example of this can be observed in the following extract from journal 8 of the practitioners.

“.....Another student asked me to translate a whole sentence. At the beginning I refused to the idea of translating everything for him. I wanted to be a help so I started to make him questions like how do you say: voy a ir a. This with the idea of expecting him to answer me I am going to, so I could explain to him what he needed to write. However, I immediately realized that this student did not have an idea of how to use future or even the verb to have. So, I decided to do most of the translation even though I knew that the aim of the whole project was being lost. I felt disappointed of two things. First of myself, because I were not supposed to be a translator I was supposed to be the guide for that student so he could learn some English.”

E8; Londoño, Nov/15th/2017 (5-14)

The extract presented is an example of how the learners' limited English level impacted not only in the student's willingness to work, but also in the practitioners' negative perceptions towards the results of this project. However, class number five and the last session are proof of students' progress in the speaking skill.

During class number five, students performed a T.V news program. In this activity, it was evident that some students' progress in term of fluency, pronunciation and intonation when asking questions. However, they still needed to work on their tone of voice when speaking in front of an audience. In the same way, another example when students overcame language

limitations occurred in the last session of this implementation. The situation is expressed below and it is taken from journal number nine of one the practitioners:

“...In regard to students’ speaking skill, it is important to mention that at the end, they were able to talk in front of their classmates about their final products architectural models of a utopian city and vertical gardens)...I have to mention that at least there were five students that did not use their notes during their presentations. Their speech was fluent, consistent with their level of proficiency. In fact, they knew what they had to say. Additionally, there was a particular case with a student that presented his architectural model of the utopian city by himself. He conducted a complete presentation. Although he made some mistakes, his speech was very fluent. It was a really interesting presentation. He explained all the aspects of the city in a very detailed way”.

E9; Cano; Nov; 22; 2017 (17-19 - 43-50)

The evidences presented above show that in spite of students’ English limitations during some classes some of them were able to make an effort when facing speaking activities in English. In addition, it is worth highlighting that at the end of the project all of them made the oral presentation having as a result a progress in their speaking skills. Moreover, it is important to mention that it is teachers’ responsibility to consider the language demands that an specific task requires from the students. Nunan (2004) argues that teachers cannot expect that learners develop tasks that require the production of language that they have not been exposed to. In the same way, Brown (2000) explains the importance of considering all the specific language needs of the students when planning a class or a task, so students can achieve the goals planned.

To conclude, English teachers that are willing to implement new methodologies such as Project-Based learning, should consider the language demands required for carrying out the tasks. Indeed, tasks and activities have to be planned for the specific necessities of the students involved.

Institutional Limitations

Implementing a methodology such as project based learning requires a series of characteristics that the context needs to fulfill. For instance, the use of sources like internet connection and technological devices. During the development of the lessons, the use of internet connection was required due to the fact that Project- Based learning involves students' autonomy. As teachers, we aimed to assign tasks for students to develop in class using internet. For example, researching information for the projects that they could share with the whole class. Even though at the beginning of the implementation the principal of the school assured that all of the resources needed were available for us, throughout the process we found out that there were some limitations. One example of the unavailability of sources can be noticed in the following extract of journal 2 of one of the practitioners.

“...Another aspect to consider is that the school conditions are not as good or appropriate for us as we thought they could be. For example, there is not good internet connection and we could not work on the project in the school's library”

E2; Cano; Sep/27/2017 (7-9)

During this implementation, we had to deal with the fact that the computer lab only was available for the computer class. Although we wanted to use it for developing our lesson and presenting different material to the students, it was impossible. Moreover, since the first class,

we realized that there was not internet connection as the principal told us during our first meeting. Therefore, as a possible solution, we decided to ask for the video projector, which we needed for presenting slides and videos, but it was always booked during our sessions. Based on that, we looked for different spaces to make students work on the development of their skills and their projects. Hence, for the second class we booked the library. However, when we went to carry out the class, the librarian told us that students could not talk, move the chairs or use the books inside the library.

For the reasons mentioned above, we decided to use only the space of the classroom, which allowed students to arrange the chairs for working in groups while developing the language activities, the architectural models and vertical gardens. Furthermore, for presenting vocabulary and explanations about the importance of vertical gardens and architectural model for the environment, we made use of flashcards and recycled materials such as toilet paper rolls, cardboard and bottles. In addition to this, we presented them our own architectural model of an utopian city for illustrating the kind of project expected, short readings for giving input to the students, among other resources. In that sense, we reflected upon the suggestion proposed by Brown (2000) that highlights the importance of identifying the institutional factors where your lessons will be implemented. He states that we need to be sure about the availability of the resources and equipment, the space of the classrooms, the books we can use in classes among other aspects.

In brief, although all the limitations faced in this particular institution in terms of resources and spaces affected the development of the project, as teachers we found the means to overcome them. Thus, we looked for different strategies, activities and material for carrying out the classes and for giving enough input, sources, vocabulary and language to the students, so

they were able to achieve the goals, presenting an architectural model of a vertical garden and a utopian city through an oral presentation.

8.2 Students' responses

In this category, aspects regarding learners' behavior and attitude towards working with project-based learning will be introduced and supported with their respective evidences. It is important to highlight that in relation to cooperation abilities both challenges and strengths will be presented.

Strengths

Teamwork as a result of students' commitment with the project

The implementation of PBL in 9th graders evidenced that working in groups with the purpose of creating a final product enhanced teamwork among some groups. In relation to cooperation abilities, three groups out of seven stood out for their commitment with the development of their projects. During the implementation, these groups demonstrated cooperation and negotiation skills. For instance, students distributed roles and assigned tasks for specific stages of the project. In addition, they showed initiative as they proposed the use of different materials and innovative ideas for the creation of architectural models of the vertical garden and the utopian city. These aspects are expressed in journal number six of one of the practitioners:

“Three groups brought their own material different from the one that we had given them in previous classes. They were showing leadership and interest with the development of the project. In one group they were so organized that they even had a sketch of the architectural

model. Another group was organizing their work and one of the members said “ Esto es lo primero que vamos a hacer... Y después hacemos el centro comercial...”

E6; Londoño; October 25th, 2017 (4-10)

Another example comes from one group who, despite their English limitation, showed willingness to participate. They demonstrated responsibility with their materials and disposition to enhance their abilities in relation to their speaking skills. For instance, when students were asked to write the script for the final oral presentation, they did a huge effort to produce it, asking for the spelling of words as well as the meaning of unknown vocabulary and its pronunciation. Regardless the language limitations, their interest for participating in the project was constant; they frequently asked for guidance and helped each other for the fulfillment of the tasks.

Even though not all the groups were equally compromised, these evidences reflect how working around a project can prompt students' teamwork and leadership. As Railsback (2002) mentions, working in groups allows students to participate and present their ideas to complete certain activities. Having a sketch about the architectural model is proof of how students can share their ideas to achieve the same goal. Similar to Railsback, Dorney (2001) states that “*in cooperative situations there is a sense of obligation and moral responsibility to the fellow-cooperators*”. The groups mentioned above accomplished the purpose of teamwork activities since they collaborated responsibly, sharing ideas and respecting their duties in the groups to finish different tasks in order to develop the final oral presentation and the architectural models (See appendix 7)

In short, when students have a common goal to achieve, skills such as cooperation and responsibility emerge despite of their language limitations. In fact, learners who had language restrictions at the beginning of the sessions but showed commitment during the development of

the project, demonstrated an improvement in the final oral presentation. This proves that implementing PBL fosters teamwork abilities which leads to the development of cooperative and communicative skills while constructing a project and progressing in their language skills.

Challenges

Teamwork was affected by contextual patterns.

Four groups out of seven did not demonstrate interest and responsibility towards the project. In the context where the implementation took place, students were not used to complete demanding tasks that required a level of commitment. In addition, participants were not accustomed to be exposed to the foreign language during their English classes. Furthermore, the students' fear of public embarrassment affected the project's purpose of exposing them to speaking activities in front of their classmates, having as a result their lack of interest and participation in class.

The following extract from one journal of one of the practitioners demonstrates that above all the behavioral patterns already explained, the fear to public embarrassment was one of the main causes of students' lack of interest.

“...After this session, I consider that students do not want to speak in English because, as some of them mentioned, they are afraid of making mistakes and they do not want to make a fool out of themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for us to work on that issue...”

E4; Cano; Oct/11/2017 (37-39)

Having in mind students' concern of speaking in public, we decided to provide feedback to each group in terms of pronunciation. However, four groups out of seven were reluctant to receive feedback and participate in the speaking tasks. Additionally, we had to be constantly reminding them that all the activities and the final oral presentation were going to be graded. Due to this situation, during class number seven the in-service teacher made the decision that all the activities we developed with them and the oral presentation were worth 40% of the fourth period. Therefore, the students completed the speaking activities and carried out the final oral presentation because it was mandatory and not because they were interested in their projects and their language skills.

Even though Fragoulis (2009) proposes that providing the students the opportunity to select the own members of their teams as well as the topic of the project encourage them to work collaboratively, the motivation in this implementation had to do with other factors. It is evident that because of contextual patterns under which students are used to be taught, grades have a motivational influence. Hence, in these types of contexts, implementing PBL represents a challenge since students tend to complete activities and assignments for getting passing grades instead of intrinsic motivational factors.

8.3 Linguistic outcomes

This category provides findings in terms of students' language development regarding their speaking skill. The implementation of this project evidenced two different results. On the one hand, three groups out of seven made a progress in the oral skill while other four groups did not demonstrate improvement.

During the last session of the project, all the groups were able to talk in front of their classmates about their final products using all of the stages proposed for the oral presentation. It is important to highlight that three groups out of seven evidenced an improvement in relation to some components of the speaking skill such as pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy and body language. The following chart illustrates the performance of all the groups in each component assessed in the final oral presentation.

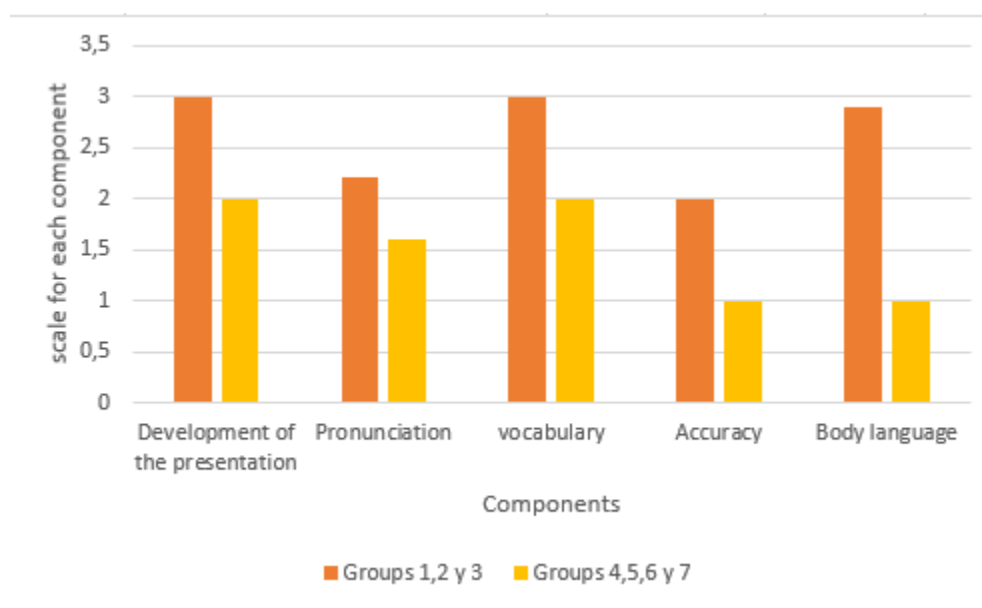


Figure 1 Results of the groups in oral skills.

This chart evidences the results in terms of linguistic outcomes in two sets of groups, the first one related to ones who actively participated during the whole implementation and the other one related to those who were not involved during the process. The rubric used for assessing speaking during the oral presentation had six items, development of the presentation, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, body language and teamwork. As it can be noted in the chart, five of them were related directly to students' speaking skill. Each item had three levels of performance, poor, fair and good with its corresponding descriptors (see appendix 8).

In the first set, the results were positive since their performance was between two and three which represents fair and good respectively. This means that, the development of the presentation was organized and well-structured, their pronunciation did not interfere with the intended message, and students were able to monitor their mistakes. In terms of vocabulary, it was evidenced the appropriate use of the words taught in class. Besides, students' speech was clear, fluent and grammatically accurate according to their English level. Finally, students maintained eye contact and interacted with audience while carrying out the oral presentation.

One example of the groups that showed a general improvement in their speaking skill is presented in the following transcript of an oral presentation.

“ [...] Hi, good morning the members of our group are [...] and me. Our group will talk about a utopian city. The name of our city is Dreamtopia.

[...] The city has animals, houses, gardens, trees, cars, street, museum (pronounced as “museo” in Spanish), library, school, ice store, mall, supermarket, hotel, hydroelectric, turbines, solar panels, a river, pets area, central park.

[...] The people are friendly, honest, hardworking, they... the people like to do sports, help animals and take care of the environment.

[...] What people do to survive? The people harvest food and vegetables for selling to other cities ehh, raise animals for selling too, sell handworks and creative things.

[...] Materials (pronounced as materiales in Spanish) I used were boxes, eh plastic, ehh bottles, cardboard, eggs boxes, eh toilet paper rolls, mmm and milk boxes.

Thank you so much, that's all.”

Thomas (2000) claims that project-based learning supports students' learning process

throughout the development of a project. When it refers to language teaching, PBL can represent a more engaging and dynamic model as the language is being used to accomplish an authentic purpose instead of studying the different skills in an isolated and abstract way. This fact allowed the students from the groups that were committed with the project to show a progress in relation to their speaking skill since they were able to conduct an oral presentation about the architectural models they were working on during the implementation. Thus, project based learning can give students a guidance while they are learning a new language.

The second set, on the other hand, did not enhance their speaking as expected due to their constant lack of interest and commitment with the creation of the project. Figure 1 shows that their linguistic performance was between one and two, which represents poor and fair (see appendix 9), and the paralinguistic aspects were also between this range. This result means that the oral presentation was not well structured or that it lacked of an introduction or conclusion. The students at these levels had different grammar and pronunciation mistakes that affected the comprehension of the speech. Thus, they constantly mispronounced the same words throughout the presentation and they were not able to correct themselves. Moreover, they had a limited range of vocabulary related to their topic. Lastly, students' body language did not evidence interest in the presentation. For instance, students' eye contact and interaction was limited.

The next transcript of one oral presentation evidences the limitations mentioned above.

[...] The purpose of the vertical garden is to decorate the classroom and... to use the /resiklaɪ/, the /resiclaɪ/ /mate'rjal s/ and eh.

[...] [ma te 'rjal s]eeh. Plastic /borels/, /rob/ eeh staples eh /sɪsors/, seeds, soil and (not comprehensible word).

[...] We /mɪʃʊr/ the strings in what plan we made. (long pause) to the holes /borels/ (pause) and we take the land in the /borels/ and some seeds

[...] /Prosedur/, /first/ we get the materials then we cut /borels/ eeh (long pause) sembrated eeh rope not stay (sights) stay as tick

[...] ya.

Even though project based learning provides a guidance that supports students' improvement in their language skills, it is necessary that the students meet certain requirements such as interest and initiative. Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2005) suggest that the roles of the teachers and the students are important aspects for the successful implementation of the projects. In these four groups, the role of the students affected their progress in relation to their speaking skill as they were not committed with the project. During the creation of the architectural models they did not show interest in the activities proposed for achieving the final goal of the process. This demonstrates that who were involved and interested in the development of the project achieved better results in the development of their speaking skill. To conclude, when implementing PBL for enhancing the language skills, learners should be involved and interested in the main topic of the project, so they can fulfill the language demands required for developing it.

9. Conclusions

Once the results were presented, some methodological and pedagogical conclusions can be drawn from the implementation of project-based learning to promote the speaking skill in ninth graders in a public school in Colombia. Three main aspects were concluded. First, the implementation of project-based learning requires that learners meet a certain profile in order to fulfil the demands of the tasks. Second, language demands and students' concerns should be considered in lesson planning with the purpose of achieving the objectives set for the project. Finally, project-based learning methodology provides the opportunity to improve the speaking skill since it allows the development of cooperative and communicative activities.

PBL requires learners to be committed, responsible and interested in the development of the project so that they fulfil the demands of the tasks proposed. During this implementation, not all the students fit the profile already explained. Therefore, they needed the practitioners to be constantly monitoring the whole process so the activities could be completed. For instance, it was necessary to guide them in every activity, asking questions and encouraging them to work. Besides, the tasks had to be graded in order for them to show interest in the project. That is why; if learners show difficulties meeting the profile required for implementing PBL methodology, it is teachers' responsibility to monitor every step made so the project can achieve the expected results.

As this project aimed to promote the speaking skill in ninth graders, language demands and students' concerns towards the activities should be reflected in the lesson planning. The participants of this implementation expressed their disagreement with the activities proposed due to their language limitations. Hence, it was concluded that sometimes teachers tend to leave aside the needs of the context involved, focusing only on planning activities that look for the

accomplishment of the project's objectives. For that reason, it is important to provide spaces where students can express their ideas and suggestions for the development of the project. Thus, it is recommended to bear in mind that the successful achievement of the tasks also relies on the importance of learners' needs in the designing of the project.

In this context, PBL prompted students' oral skills as it provided the opportunity to practice the English language throughout cooperative and communicative activities. For achieving the final goal of this implementation which was to carry out an oral presentation in which learners were able to present their architectural models, they were involved in the development of different speaking activities that allowed them to rehearse and practice before conducting the final presentation. That is why, despite the students' language limitations, providing spaces for practicing, giving feedback and guiding students during the whole process for preparing an oral presentation helped them to present a well structure speech.

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Observation Form

Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira
Licenciatura En Bilingüismo con énfasis en Inglés.



Classroom Project

Observation form



Observer: _____

Date: _____ School: _____

Circle the item that represents your evaluation. 3 is for excellent 2 needs improvement, 1 unsatisfactory and NA not applicable.

1. Teamwork prompts' interaction in English 3 2 **1** n/a
2. Students try to improve their speaking skill in terms of vocabulary
3 2 1 n/a
3. Students try to improve their speaking skill in terms of grammar structure.
3 2 1 n/a
4. Students' participation inside the groups in which they are doing the project is active
3 2 1 n/a
1. Students' general participation is active 3 2 1 n/a
1. Learners' understanding of the topics is evident when they are participating in oral tasks.
3 2 1 n/a
1. Activities enhance students speaking development 3 2 1 n/a

Comments.

Appendix 2 Rubric

	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 GOOD
Development of the presentation	The oral presentation is not well organized. There is not an introduction, body and conclusion reflected.	Oral presentation reflects some organization. It has a good introduction but it lacks in content and a conclusion.	Speech is well structured. It has a clear introduction.the development of the content is reflected as well as a conclusion
Pronunciation	Student repeats several times the same mistake and the pronunciation interferes in the understanding of the meaning	Student has some difficulty pronouncing some words but it does not interfere in the meaning. Student is able to monitor their mispronunciation.	Student mispronunciation is minimum and it does not interfere in the intended message.
Vocabulary	Has very limited vocabulary with the familiar topic.	The use of some words is frequent.	Uses appropriate vocabulary regarding the familiar topic
Accuracy	The grammar structures present several mistakes that do not allow comprehending the intended message.	Although some grammatical mistakes are made they do not interfere in the intended message and student is able to correct her/himself.	Grammar mistakes are minimum and they do not interfere in getting the message across
Body language	Student body language does not show interest in the presentation. He/she leans back on the wall and keeps his/her hand in the pockets. Eye contact	She or he maintains some eye contact and interaction. Body language still needs improvement.	She or he maintains good eye contact, interaction and body language is appropriate

	is poor.		
Teamwork TOTAL OF POINTS: ___/18	Students did not work on teams. She/he needs more commitment with their partners.	The students did not accompany during all the process the development of the project	The student supports their classmates during the development of the project. Teamwork is clearly evidence among them

Appendix 3 Survey



Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira

Licenciatura en Bilingüismo con Énfasis en Inglés

Implementation of Project-Based Learning to improve conversation skills in 9th graders from José Antonio Galán School

Si tuviera que crear un proyecto para mejorar algo en su entorno social y que sea de su interés, ¿en cuál de los siguientes campos le gustaría enfocarse?

Marque con un chulo ✓ al lado de la opción que más llama su atención.

- Tecnología
- Medio ambiente
- Salud
- Artes
- Globalización
- Culturas Colombianas

Appendix 4 Lesson Plan: Class 1

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA

Licenciatura en Bilingüismo con énfasis en inglés

GENERAL PLANNING

NAME OF SCHOOL: Jose Antonio Galán Sede principal	
NAME OF TEACHERS: Daniela Castaño Grajales: Teacher Valentina Cano Ramírez: Assistant Maria del Mar Londoño Ortiz: Observer	
GRADE& GROUP: Ninth grade 9C	
TIME TABLE 90 minutes	
NUMBER OF LEARNERS: 27	AVERAGE AGE OF LEARNERS: 14 to 16 years old

LESSON PLAN

Date of the class: Wednesday, September 13th 2017	Class Number: 1
AIM: At the end of the lesson students will be able to explain what a utopian city and a vertical garden mean in an oral form.	
Driving question: Which are the characteristics of and utopian city and a vertical garden?	
Materials: flashcards, markers, readings, balls, tape	

STAGE/ TIME	Project Phase: Designing the projects' activities. (utopian city- vertical garden)	PROCEDURE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY	ANTICIPATED PROBLEMS	COMMENTS
Warm up activity “Saying the name game” 10min		Ts will ask ss to make a circle, T will throw to another person a ball saying “Hi my name is Daniela and I like music”. So, that person has to say “Hi daniela, my name is _____ and I like _____”. Ts will exemplify the activity for the ss. Other ball will be added to the game in order to make it challenging.	Ss may do not want to participate.	
Presenta tion stage Explana tion of the project 5min		T will tell the students what is the whole project about, how many classes it will take and what are the products that they will develop using images. Code switching	Ss may have some questions or doubts. T will answer them as clear as possible.	
Brainsto rming ideas 5min		T will ask ss questions such as “What do you know about vertical gardens and utopian cities? T will write the ideas on the board.	Ss may do not anything about the topics. T will give some clues that will be explained later on.	
Utopian		T will explain the meaning of utopian city and vertical garden by using different images. T will exemplify the	Ss may use the mother tongue. T will repeat the information in	

city and vertical garden description		<p>concepts relating them to real life legends and examples. Then, t will ask ss to say “What recycle materials could be used to create a utopian city and a vertical garden?”</p> <p>T will write that information on the board.</p> <p>T will present the vocabulary related to the previous questions through images and short descriptions (soil, bottles, sows, cardboard, boxes, toilet paper roll, eggs boxes, plastic. T will ask them to repeat the vocabulary orally to practice pronunciation.</p>	<p>English.</p> <p>Ss may do not want to answer the questions. T will encourage them by giving examples of the possible answers.</p>	
Practice Reading activity	Grouping activity	<p>T and assistant will hand a reading which summarizes all the information provided so far. (Definition of concepts, characteristics of them, material necessary to create the products). First T will ask ss to read individually and to highlight vocabulary already seen in class. Then, T will read the text with the students emphasizing in pronunciation and comprehension. T will clarify doubts and questions.</p>	<p>Students could do not want to read aloud. T will read with them.</p>	
Production Building concepts “utopian city - vertical city” definitio	<p>Wrap up activity</p> <p>Questions time</p>	<p>T will explain that it is necessary to gather 8 groups of 4 people for the rest of the classes. Four groups will work with utopian cities and the other 4 with vertical garden. T will give the opportunity to choose the people they want to work with. T will ask ss to assign roles (leader, designer on paper, writer, researcher)T will explain what is each role about. T will ask ss to write the members of the group and a piece of paper and give it to her.</p> <p>T will ask ss to give the definition of the concept of the project that they decided to work on and the leader of the group</p>	<p>Ss could misbehave and take too much time. T and assistant will control and support them during the process.</p> <p>Students may find difficult writing the definition. Ss may do not want to speak aloud.T will help them.</p>	

ns 15min		<p>will have to share the definition with the whole class.</p> <p>T will ask students to ask any question that they may have about the project and products.</p>		
ANNOUNCEMENTS, THINGS TO CONSIDER:				
REFLECTION SESSION:				

Appendix 5 Class material







Appendix 6 Interview activity: Script: presenting the news

Hurricane María in Puerto Rico

Interview Script

Roles: presenter, reporter, survivor

Presenter: Good morning, welcome to _____ news. The island of Puerto Rico has been affected by Hurricane María. Right now we are connecting with _____ that is there. _____ Tell us how is the situation in Puerto Rico?

Reporter (1): Good morning _____. Unfortunately the news, here in Puerto Rico, are terrible. The whole island is devastated.

Presenter: It is so sad to hear that. This hurricane was formed on September 16th of this year and hit Puerto Rico on September the 20th as a hurricane of category fourth (4).

Reporter (2): Yes, you are right _____. Here there is no electricity, there is no tap water and there is an island-wide communication blacked out. Let me introduce you a police officer named _____. He/she is going to tell us a little bit more about the situation

Police officer: Good morning _____, _____. I can tell you that the general balance is quite worrying. Approximately ninety three (93) people were killed by the hurricane and the total losses from the hurricane are estimated at between fifteen point nine (\$15.9) and ninety five (\$95) billion dollars.

Reporter (1) : Thank you so much for the information. There is all from Puerto Rico. To _____ news _____.

Appendix 7 Students' projects

Utopian City



Vertical garden:



Appendix 8 Rubric

JUAN JOSE HERNANDEZ	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 GOOD
Development of the presentation	The oral presentation is not well organized. There is not an introduction, body and conclusion reflected.	Oral presentation reflects some organization. It has a good introduction but it lacks in content and a conclusion.	Speech is well structured. It has a clear introduction the development of the content is reflected as well as a conclusion ✓
Pronunciation	Student repeats several times the same mistake and the pronunciation interferes in the understanding of the meaning	Student has some difficulty pronouncing some words but it does not interfere in the meaning. Student is able to monitor their mispronunciation.	Student mispronunciation is minimum and it does not interfere in the intended message. ✓
Vocabulary	Has very limited vocabulary with the familiar topic.	The use of some words is frequent.	Uses appropriate vocabulary regarding the familiar topic ✓
Accuracy	The grammar structures present several mistakes that do not allow comprehending the intended message.	Although some grammatical mistakes are made they do not interfere in the intended message and student is able to correct her/himself.	Grammar mistakes are minimum and they do not interfere in getting the message across ✓
Body language	Student body language does not show interest in the presentation. He/she leans back on the wall and keeps his/her hand in the pockets. Eye contact is poor.	She or he maintains some eye contact and interaction. Body language still needs improvement. ✓	She or he maintains good eye contact, interaction and body language is appropriate
Teamwork TOTAL OF POINTS: 15/18	Students did not work on teams. She/he needs more commitment with their partners.	The students did not accompany during all the process the development of the project	The student supports their classmates during the development of the project. Teamwork is clearly evidence among them ✓

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Appendix 9 Rubric

LAURA VALENTINA VARGAS	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 GOOD
Development of the presentation	The oral presentation is not well organized. There is not an introduction, body and conclusion reflected.	Oral presentation reflects some organization. It has a good introduction but it lacks in content and a conclusion. ✓	Speech is well structured. It has a clear introduction, the development of the content is reflected as well as a conclusion
Pronunciation	Student repeats several times the same mistake and the pronunciation interferes in the understanding of the meaning ✓	Student has some difficulty pronouncing some words but it does not interfere in the meaning. Student is able to monitor their mispronunciation.	Student mispronunciation is minimum and it does not interfere in the intended message.
Vocabulary	Has very limited vocabulary with the familiar topic.	The use of some words is frequent. ✓	Uses appropriate vocabulary regarding the familiar topic
Accuracy	The grammar structures present several mistakes that do not allow comprehending the intended message. ✓	Although some grammatical mistakes are made they do not interfere in the intended message and student is able to correct her/himself.	Grammar mistakes are minimum and they do not interfere in getting the message across
Body language	Student body language does not show interest in the presentation. He/she leans back on the wall and keeps his/her hand in the pockets. Eye contact is poor. ✓	She or he maintains some eye contact and interaction. Body language still needs improvement.	She or he maintains good eye contact, interaction and body language is appropriate
Teamwork	Students did not work on teams. She/he needs more commitment with their partners. ✓	The students did not accompany during all the process the development of the project	The student supports their classmates during the development of the project. Teamwork is clearly evidence among them
TOTAL OF POINTS: 8/18			

Procedure
First
Materials

2,2